THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes. Delhi-based diplomats, as a part of their normal diplomatic functioning, visited Jammu and Kashmir during the Assembly Elections in the State. There was also no restriction on any other visitor; who was otherwise present in India, from going to J and K during this period.

(b) About 30 Delhi-based diplomats *inter alia* from Australia, Britain, Canada, Denmark, European Commission, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America were issued special passes by the Election Commission of India, following precedent, to see the elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

(c) Any reports/impressions given by the diplomats would have been to their respective Governments, which is again a part of the normal diplomatic functioning.

(d) Jammu and Kashmir elections have been positively assessed in comments by members of the international community.

Foreign policy

1709. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the features of Government's foreign policy;

(b) how far this policy has helped in strengthening relations especially with Asian countries;

(c) whether Government propose to bring changes in its foreign policy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) The basic tenets of the foreign policy are to safeguard and to promote country's core interests and to ensure the security of its people. With these objectives in view, the Government remains engaged with all the countries especially the countries which represent our immediate and proximate neighbourhood.

(c) and (d) Conduct of foreign policy is a dynamic and continuous exercise based on a realistic and pragmatic assessment of politico-strategic and socio-economic milieu around us. While basic principles and objectives of our foreign policy provide the element of continuity, our priorities and

focus undergo changes in response to new challenges and developments around the world and in the neighbourhood. As a result, there is a greater sensitivity to our core concerns.

Trade between India and Afghanistan

1710. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 250 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 21st November, 2002 and state:

(a) the other alternative routes of trade between India and Afghanistan; and

(b) the details of the items which are traded between both the countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) India and Afghanistan trade and economic relations continue to strengthen through commercially available channels and routes including through Bandarabbas and Chabahar ports in Iran, and through Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

(b) the major items that are traded between India and Afghanistan include tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes, rubber and articles thereof, cotton articles of apparel and clothing, and edible fruits and nuts.

Economic co-operation with Japan

1711. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of India's proposed economic cooperation with Japan, which was agreed by the Prime Minister during his meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister in September this year;

(b) the details of the proposed joint fight of India and Japan against global terrorism; and

(c) what is the current status of the ongoing developmental projects in the country with Japanese collaboration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Prime Ministers of India and Japan during their meeting in New York on 12 September 2002 agreed that they look forward to further promoting bilateral relations in accordance with the